



# Is the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) a Departure from Biblical Christianity?

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The New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) is a movement that has garnered significant attention in recent years. It is characterized by the belief in the restoration of apostles and prophets to the modern-day church. While proponents argue that this restoration is essential for the church's vitality and mission, critics contend that it introduces unbiblical structures of church authority and teachings that often diverge from traditional Christian doctrine. As devout followers of Christ, it is crucial to discern the biblical truth and be wary of any teachings that may lead us astray.

The NAR emerged in the late 20th century and has been popularized by figures such as C. Peter Wagner, who coined the term. Wagner and other NAR leaders assert that God is restoring the offices of apostle and prophet, which they believe were lost after the early church era. According to NAR theology, these modern apostles and prophets are endowed with extraordinary authority and revelation, which are purportedly necessary for the church to fulfill its mission on earth.

## Biblical Examination of Apostles and Prophets

The Bible does speak of apostles and prophets as foundational to the early church. [Ephesians 2:20](#) states, *"built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."*

However, it is essential to understand the context and role of these offices in the New Testament.

1. **Apostles:** The original apostles were specifically chosen by Jesus Christ ([Mark 3:14-15](#)) and were eyewitnesses to His resurrection ([Acts 1:21-22](#)). Their primary role was to lay the foundation of the church through preaching, teaching, and writing much of the New Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ([Ephesians 3:4-5](#)).
2. **Prophets:** In the early church, prophets provided direct revelation from God during a time when the New Testament was not yet complete. Their messages were tested for authenticity and alignment with the apostolic teaching ([1 Corinthians 14:29](#); [1 John 4:1](#)).

The New Testament does not indicate that these offices were intended to be perpetuated in the same form throughout the church age. Instead, the completed canon of Scripture serves as the ultimate authority for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)).

## Criticisms of the NAR

1. **Authority and Accountability:** One of the primary concerns is the significant authority that NAR apostles and prophets claim to possess. This authority often goes unchecked and is not subject to the same level of accountability found within traditional church structures. Such unchecked power can lead to spiritual abuse and manipulation.
2. **Extra-Biblical Revelations:** NAR leaders often claim to receive new revelations from God, which can lead to teachings that contradict or add to the Scriptures. This practice is warned against in the Bible. [Proverbs 30:5-6](#) cautions, *"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar."*
3. **Ecclesiology:** The NAR's structure of church governance deviates from the New Testament model. Traditional Christian doctrine emphasizes the plurality of elders ([Titus 1:5-9](#)) and the priesthood of all believers ([1 Peter 2:9](#)). The hierarchical model promoted by the NAR can undermine these biblical principles.
4. **Prosperity Gospel and Dominionism:** Many NAR leaders promote the prosperity gospel, which equates faith with financial and physical well-being, and dominionism, which advocates for Christians to take dominion over societal structures. These teachings can divert believers' focus from the gospel of Jesus Christ and the call to live humble, servant-hearted lives ([Mark 10:42-45](#)).

## Additional Concerns

The NAR movement is criticized for emphasizing experience over Scripture, mysticism over doctrine, and the role of modern-day apostles and prophets over the plain text of the Bible. This includes seeking new revelations and performing miracles which can diverge significantly from biblical teachings.

1. **Growth and Influence:** The NAR's growth is primarily driven by small groups and independent church planting, often without a central governing body. Notable leaders include Bill Johnson, Rick Joyner, Kim Clement, and Lou Engle.
2. **Dominion Theology:** The NAR teaches that Jesus' sacrifice empowers Christians to retake control of the earth, advocating for influence in seven key areas: government, arts, finances, education, religion, family, and media. This often leads to an overemphasis on political and cultural control, diverging from Jesus' declaration that His kingdom is not of this world ([John 18:36](#)).
3. **Spiritual Warfare:** NAR practices often involve identifying and combating demonic influences believed to cause worldly troubles, treating spiritual warfare as a solution to physical and social problems. This approach can lead to unbiblical practices and beliefs.

## A Call to Discernment

As Christians, we are called to discernment. The Apostle Paul warns in [2 Timothy 4:3-4](#), *"For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."*

The Bereans are commended in [Acts 17:11](#) for examining the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul said was true.

Likewise, we must diligently study the Word of God and test all teachings against it ([1 Thessalonians 5:21](#)).

## The New Apostolic Church

The New Apostolic Church (NAC) shares some similarities with the NAR in its belief in the restoration of modern-day apostles. Founded in the 19th century, the NAC claims to continue the work of the early apostles and holds to the belief that salvation is mediated through their apostleship. However, the NAC's teachings include several distinctive doctrines that diverge from mainstream Christianity:

1. **Sacramentalism:** The NAC emphasizes sacraments such as Holy Baptism, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion, which they believe are essential for salvation. This view contrasts with the evangelical understanding that salvation is by grace through faith alone ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)).
2. **Hierarchy of Apostles:** Like the NAR, the NAC places a strong emphasis on the authority of their apostles. This hierarchical structure is seen as necessary for administering sacraments and guiding the church, which can lead to an undue emphasis on human authority rather than the priesthood of all believers.
3. **Additional Scriptures:** The NAC holds to the Bible but also considers the doctrinal statements of their apostles as authoritative. This practice can lead to teachings that are not entirely based on the canonical Scriptures, which poses a risk of doctrinal error.

## Addressing Doctrinal Divergences

The concerns surrounding both the NAR and NAC highlight the importance of adhering to sound biblical doctrine. The following points are crucial for maintaining doctrinal integrity:

1. **Scripture Alone (Sola Scriptura):** The Bible must remain the ultimate authority for faith and practice. Any teaching or revelation that contradicts or adds to the Scriptures should be rejected. [Revelation 22:18-19](#) warns against adding to or taking away from God's Word.
2. **The Gospel of Grace:** Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. [Ephesians 2:8-9](#) makes it clear that it is not by works but by God's grace that we are saved. Any teaching that adds requirements to this simple gospel must be scrutinized.
3. **Christ's Sufficiency:** Jesus Christ is the head of the church ([Colossians 1:18](#)). His finished work on the cross is sufficient for our salvation and sanctification. The focus should always remain on Christ and His redemptive work rather than human intermediaries or additional revelations.
4. **Testing the Spirits:** Believers are encouraged to test the spirits to see whether they are from God ([1 John 4:1](#)). This involves examining teachings in the light of Scripture and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit for discernment.

## Conclusion

The New Apostolic Reformation and the New Apostolic Church present significant challenges to traditional Christian beliefs and practices. While they claim to restore lost dimensions of church leadership and spirituality, their teachings and structures often diverge from biblical orthodoxy. As believers, we must remain anchored in the Scriptures, seeking God's wisdom and guidance in all things.

In humility and love, let us continue to uphold the truth of the gospel, encourage one another in sound doctrine, and pray for discernment in these challenging times. May we be ever vigilant, faithfully contending for the faith once delivered to the saints ([Jude 1:3](#)).

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